

MAGNIFICENT COINS OF THE SPANISH WORLD
THE ARCHER M. HUNTINGTON COLLECTION



*Property of The Hispanic
Society of America*

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I ARCHER MILTON HUNTINGTON

At the apex of the Gilded Age, one of the wealthiest and most generous philanthropists of America's second century was born into circumstances colored by the brushes of both romance and scandal. His indomitable mother gave him the names of his father (Archer) and his maternal grandfather (Milton), but she otherwise so distorted and obscured the circumstances of his birth that even today they cannot be accurately discovered.

Archer M. Huntington was born Archer M. Worsham on 10 March 1870. That much, and no more, is generally agreed. No birth certificate survives and there is no consensus about his birthplace. New York City is cited most frequently, but conflicting evidence suggests that his mother resided with family in either Richmond, Virginia, or San Marcos, Texas, prior to her confinement.

Arabella Duval Yarrington claimed to have married John Archer Worsham at some appropriate point prior to the birth of her son. Like Arabella, Worsham was a native of Richmond, and he ran a gambling house in the Confederate capital during the Civil War, subsequently moving his business to New York City after the Union victory. While it is possible that Arabella and Worsham might have had some sort of wedding ceremony performed (no marriage license is recorded), it is certain they were never legally wed, for John Worsham had been married to another woman since at least 1866.

Arabella also claimed to have been widowed prior to Archer's birth, but this too was false: John Worsham, with his lawful wife, had returned to Richmond as early as the summer of 1870. He failed in his attempt to reprise his wartime success operating a card parlor, and the obituary that appeared in the 18 May 1878 issue of the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* reported that the father of the boy who would become Archer Milton Huntington had "died poor." While this is the most likely narrative of Archer Huntington's paternity, it is not the only one: few specifics of Archer's early life are so well established that they do not exist in rival versions.

About the time of John Worsham's chimerical marriage and death, Arabella met Collis Potter Huntington, one of the "Big Four" of the Central Pacific Railroad, almost certainly through the offices of John Yarrington, her younger brother. John Yarrington had begun work on Collis Huntington's railroads as a conductor, and by 1880 he was a superintendent in charge of several divisions of the Chesapeake and Ohio line, a position of responsibility equivalent to that then held by Collis's nephew, Henry Huntington.

A. Hyatt Mayor, Archer Huntington's nephew by marriage, has matter-of-factly written that Archer's stepfather, Collis Huntington, was also his natural father. There is nothing to corroborate Mayor's statement, which may be credited to family sensitivity. Archer's mother, who was likely seventeen when Archer was conceived (though variant sources would make her as old as nineteen and as young as fifteen) continued to use the name Arabella D. Worsham until her marriage to

Collis Huntington. The two principal biographies of Collis Huntington—*Collis Potter Huntington* by C. W. Evans (2 vols., 1954) and *The Great Persuader* by David Lavender (1970)—scarcely mention Archer, although they perpetuate the notion that the elder Huntington adopted Belle’s boy. Moreover, like many others who knew Archer Huntington, Mayor speculated about the basis of his conspicuous reticence: “his illegitimacy scarred him with a compulsion for secrecy.” It is nearly impossible to imagine the reserved patrician broaching this topic with a nephew.

Regardless of where, and by whom, Arabella delivered her son, by late 1871, she and Archer were living in apartments on Lexington Avenue in the high twenties in a townhouse owned by Collis. Within a few years, Belle was speculating—very successfully—in residential Manhattan real estate. As her association with Huntington became more public, she was sometimes introduced as a nurse-companion to Collis’s near invalid wife, Elizabeth; and she was characterized at least once in a newspaper story as the niece of the great railroad man. Elizabeth Stoddard Huntington died of cancer in October 1883. On 12 July 1884, Belle Yarrington Worsham married Collis Huntington, and her son assumed her new husband’s last name, although a formal, legal adoption was never effected.

Young Archer was little known to society, but under his mother’s supervision he had received a superb education from a succession of tutors, complemented by long tours throughout Europe. When he was twelve and they were wandering through London’s National Gallery, Archer told his mother that he wanted to live in a museum. He very nearly achieved that goal, remarking as an adult that “Wherever I put my foot down, a museum springs up.”

Collis helped Belle supervise Archer’s secondary education, which included studies with Yale professor William Ireland Knapp during an 1892 trip to Spain. Archer later received honorary degrees from Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and the Universidad de Madrid. Together the three Huntingtons traveled to Paris and London, visiting not only museums but galleries and dealers as well, where Collis, with his wife’s advice, began to transform his rather pedestrian collection of Old Masters and nineteenth-century pictures into one of the most significant American collections of that time. From his mother, Archer inherited a discerning eye and deep appreciation for art and cultural artifacts; from his stepfather, he inherited the means to pursue them.

While still a teenager, his interests became increasingly focused on Spain and her influence around the globe. This attraction may have been encouraged by a trip he made to Mexico City with his stepfather, where they were feted at a state dinner. A few years later he was traveling the Iberian Peninsula on his own, collecting books, manuscripts, coins, paintings, sculpture, and artifacts. Archer made periodic tours of Iberia for many years, sometimes sponsoring and participating in archaeological digs. In 1902 he acquired en bloc the unsurpassed library of Spanish literature formed by the Marquis de Jerez de los Caballeros.

In 1895, Archer was married to Helen Manchester Gates, a niece of his stepfather. The private ceremony took place in London and was evidently unexpected by everyone but the immediate families. The newlyweds returned to “Plaisance,” Lawrence Waterbury’s estate in Pelham Park, which Collis had given them as a wedding present. Archer subsequently rechristened the estate “Pleasance.”

Arabella was always discontented when separated from Archer, and the two couples socialized often and continued to travel abroad together. In 1892, Archer had declined Collis’s offer of management of the Newport News Drydock and Shipbuilding Company, and even after his marriage he chose not to embark on a business career. But he was nonetheless extremely active: studying, writing, collecting, and founding and otherwise supporting institutions allied with those more bookish pursuits.

Beginning in 1897 he had his own translation of the Castilian epic *El Cid*, complete with scholarly apparatus, privately printed in an edition of one hundred copies. In 1898 Putnam published his *Note-Book in Northern Spain*, a well-received travel-book (dedicated, “with sincerest love and respect,” to his mother). Archer had become a life member of the New-York Historical Society in 1890; four years later, he joined the Grolier Club. Between 1897 and 1907, he received honorary degrees from Yale, Harvard, and Columbia.

In 1904, Huntington founded The Hispanic Society of America as a free museum and research library, fulfilling an ambition that he had harbored for half of his life. He gave land at Audubon Terrace and funded the design and construction of an imposing building by his cousin Charles Pratt Huntington. More significantly, he gave the Society his unparalleled collections and the means to expand, preserve, exhibit, and study them. One of his first projects was the publication of a series of fine facsimile editions of rare or unique works from the Society’s library.

In 1911, Huntington was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and a few years afterwards he was elevated to the allied American Academy of Arts and Letters. Beginning about 1915 he added these two bodies to his benefactions, providing them land, buildings, operating funds, and his seemingly boundless energy. He was also principally responsible for establishing at Audubon Terrace the American Numismatic Society, the American Geographical Society, and the Museum of the American Indian. But Huntington’s support of museums extended well beyond Manhattan: he founded the Mariners’ Museum in Newport News, was an inaugural board member of the Huntington Library in San Marino, and established the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress.

During his thirties and forties, Huntington’s personal life was subjected to several severe jolts, but his devotion to scholarship and philanthropy remained unshaken during these decades. In 1900, Collis Huntington died, leaving Arabella and Archer a large portion of his estate and successive life interests in his art collection, which was left to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Archer relinquished his interest in the paintings after his mother’s death). Belle became even more dependent on her son, who seemed only too happy to indulge her.

Thirteen years later Arabella remarried, wedding her husband's nephew, Henry E. Huntington, who was an equal beneficiary, with Arabella and Archer, of Collis's fortune. So Archer's cousin became his stepfather; Belle's nephew, her husband; and Henry's aunt, his wife. Henry Huntington's connections proved highly beneficial in August 1914 when Archer and Helen were arrested and imprisoned as spies while traveling through Nuremberg. The suspicions of the German authorities were evidently aroused by the large number of aeronautical maps of Europe that Archer was carrying. In fact, he had been collecting them in his capacity as Chairman of the Map Committee of the Aero Club.

Then in 1918, less than two years removed from their silver wedding anniversary, Helen abandoned Archer for the married English playwright and theater manager Harley Granville Barker. She evidently informed Archer of her decision by leaving a note to that effect in the London hotel rooms they were sharing at the time. Archer was shattered and remained in London for several months, concealing the separation from their friends.

When he returned to New York that summer, he was forty-eight, divorced and alone. Always athletic—he had been an ardent yachtsman since the age of sixteen—Archer began overeating and could be found sitting, almost around the clock, at either a dining table or a desk, where he continued to oversee his philanthropic interests. Eventually his six-foot-five frame was carrying more than 350 pounds, and he was hospitalized.

Still, he continued his work, and while commissioning a medal in honor of William Dean Howells for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he met the sculptor Anna Hyatt. After a very brief courtship—during which Archer promised to lose weight—they were married in her studio on 10 March 1923; the date was also their mutual birthday, and the couple always celebrated 10 March as “three-in-one day.”

Archer and Anna were perhaps an unlikely match, but they proved to be extremely compatible. Soon her sculptures were being integrated into his museum plans, perhaps most successfully with a heroic equestrian statue of The Cid placed on the plaza in front of the Hispanic Society. Anna's support was especially important to Archer the year after their marriage, when his mother died unexpectedly. Her entire estate—including Rembrandt's *Aristotle contemplating a bust of Homer*—was left to her beloved son.

In 1931, Archer and Anna established Brookgreen Gardens on the site of a former rice plantation in South Carolina. They envisioned Brookgreen Gardens as a nature preserve for native flora and fauna and as a garden for American figural sculpture. Together with the Hispanic Society, Brookgreen became Archer's principal focus. He and Anna built a grand beach home, Atalaya, nearby and apart from a three-year period during World War II when the house was occupied by the Army Air Corps, they wintered there until 1947.

Other worthy projects still benefited from Archer's generosity, though. He worked with Spain to preserve the “Casa de Cervantes” in Valladolid and the “Casa del Greco” in Toledo. In 1943 he presented five hundred acres to the New York–New Jersey Palisades Park Commission, and in 1950 he donated his seven-hundred-acre farm in Bethel, Connecticut, to become a state park.

Archer Huntington died in December 1955 at 86; his wife, six years his junior, survived until 1973. The *New York Times* obituary described him as a philanthropist who gave away most of his wealth: “the size of the Archer Huntington fortune and the extent of his philanthropies never had been disclosed, but they were believed to have run into many millions of dollars. There was reported to be no complete list of his benefactions.”

There is no biography of Archer Huntington, which would undoubtedly please him very much. He is not even given an entry in Oxford's recent *American National Biography*—although both of his fathers-in-law, his second wife, and his mother are included. Archer Huntington's biography is written in the stone and mortar—and missions—of the museums and societies that he founded and supported. Perhaps this is nowhere better demonstrated than in the case of the one institutional relationship that he severed.

In 1940, Huntington found himself in the center of a generational struggle for control of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Between 1915 and 1936, Huntington had given the two allied societies very close to \$5,000,000 in cash, stocks, real estate, and art. He had rescued the Institute and Academy from near insolvency and allowed them to prosper. But when Huntington endorsed an amendment to the election policy of the Academy, some members wondered “whether the Academy should lose its idealistic purpose to become the toy of a very rich man.” When the proposed amendment was defeated, Huntington resigned. The Academy board moved to decline his resignation, but Huntington said, “My decision is final. I shall never enter the Academy buildings again, and I shall not reply to any letters concerning the Academy.”

Yet today, seventy years on, the American Academy of Arts and Letters grants annual cash awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$75,000 to some fifty artists, writers, composers, and architects—and the monies awarded are derived from Archer Huntington's endowment.



II INTRODUCTION

Archer M. Huntington's collection of coins relating to the history of Spain is one not only of extraordinary dimensions, but of incalculable importance. Whereas most specialized collections can be best described as an assemblage of a group of objects brought together along a narrowly focused objective, Huntington's, on the contrary, presents a vast panorama. It is a collection not of sections, but of collections — each one of which could stand on its own as a world class cabinet of museum quality and consequence.

Together, these highly distinguished specialist collections, assembled by Archer M. Huntington more than a century ago, form what is universally agreed to be the most spectacular collection of coins relating to the entirety of Spanish history outside of Spain. It is hailed as the finest ever assembled by a private collector, and ranks among the most comprehensive ever amassed, either by an individual or institution. Its breadth is simply astonishing. Mr. Huntington's lifetime passion for the peoples, culture, and history of the Iberian peninsula culminated in a galaxy of collections within which his numismatic collection is a constellation that shines brilliantly.

Recognizing at an early age the exceptional historical importance of Spain to the rest of the world, Archer Huntington made it his intention to assemble coins from every period and in every land where Spanish influence was felt, even with the lightest touch. The result is a collection, so encyclopedic in content and replete with stunning rarities that, it may be said without exaggeration, it could not be recreated today — regardless of price.

A century ago, in attempting to explain the importance of numismatics to historical research and understanding, William H. Woodin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first Secretary of the Treasury, and a colleague of Archer Huntington on the Board of the American Numismatic Society, wrote that "Coins are the metallic footprints of man."

This simple, but elegantly phrased sentiment must have been shared by Huntington, for it neatly encapsulates the broad sweep of Hispanic history that his astounding collection exhibits. Just as the "footprint" of Spain, bridging two and a half millennia and encircling the globe has no equal, neither does Huntington's accomplishment as a collector in this area.





The collection was all but complete by 1905, and in 1946 Huntington arranged to have it deposited on loan for study and publication at the American Numismatic Society (ANS) in New York. As part of the physical transfer of more than thirty thousand coins, Huntington himself took a remarkable series of photographs recording every coin, and underwrote the hiring of a new curator at the ANS — the eminent numismatist George Miles.

In 1949 Huntington officially transferred his ownership of the collection to the Board of Trustees of The Hispanic Society of America, and within a year *The Coinage of the Umayyads of Spain*, George Miles's first definitive study based on the Huntington collection, was published.

Following the death of Archer Huntington in 1955, The Hispanic Society of America discovered that more than eight thousand coins from the collection remained in Huntington's personal vault at the Society; these were subsequently deposited on loan with the American Numismatic Society as well. This "lost" portion of the collection contained a staggering number of essential pieces, including not only one hundred additional Visigothic tremisses (added to what was already the largest and most important collection ever formed), but that incomparable touchstone of the Huntington collection: the massive, glorious, and unique fifty excelentes (see illus. frontispiece and p. 7) struck by the Reyes Catolicos: Ferdinand and Isabella.

From the rough bronze issues of pre-Roman Hispania, through the glitter of Roman Imperial gold aurei, the Picasso-like portraiture of the Visigoths, the elegant lines of Kufic script, to the humble emissions of the disparate mediaeval kingdoms, the glorious issues of the Age of Discovery, and Imperial Spain, the vista of Huntington's numismatic collection is nonpareil. The few pages that follow give the most broad-brush outlines of a collection that is splendid in its parts, and irreproducible in its whole.







ANCIENT SPAIN



III ANCIENT SPAIN

Prior to Hannibal's defeat by Rome in the third century B.C. the Iberian peninsula was inhabited by a mosaic of cultures. The aboriginal Iberians found themselves squeezed by Celts entering from the north at about the same time the Phoenicians set up trading posts along the coast in the south. A few centuries later to this agglomeration was added contact with Greek traders, as well as the Carthaginians who absorbed the Phoenician settlements. Each of these cultures added their imprimatur to a mélange of coinages, which were struck by numerous "cities." Some of these emissions were imitative of more mainstream Greek coinages, such as those of Alexander the Great of Macedon, while others created designs that were unique to their area, and yet others still combined both external and internal sources.

Upon the defeat of Hannibal by Scipio at the battle of Zama in 202 B.C., and Rome's absorption of the Iberian peninsula as a province, the city coinages changed again, and through the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) tended to use Roman coins as their model, while largely retaining their local flavor. The result is an extraordinarily diverse series of coinages which are illustrative of the cultural give and take of invading and indigenous populations.

There are a number of great rarities contained in this section, such as the Carthaginian 1½ shekel or tridrachm (see illus. p. 21), which bears the head of the god Melkaart (whose features have long been thought to represent those of Hannibal himself) on one side, and an African elephant on the reverse. The enormity and incredible depth of the holding would make it all but impossible to replicate in a meaningful way.

Containing a panoply of coins struck during this formative period in Iberian history, and including a major group from the famed nineteenth century Auriol Find, Siculo-Punic issues, and thousands of examples of local Iberian and Roman provincial coinages, Huntington's collection is one of the world's finest. Its holdings in this area have been ranked as equal to those in the world's most important national collections in London (the British Museum), Paris (the Bibliothèque Nationale) and, most impressively the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid.







ROME

FROM THE REPUBLIC
THROUGH THE EMPIRE

IV ROME: FROM THE REPUBLIC THROUGH THE EMPIRE

It was the ascendancy of the Romans on the Iberian peninsula from the second century B.C. that effectively created the concept of a unified Spain. During more than six centuries, the Hispaniae or ‘Spains’ as the two provinces, Hispania Citerior and Hispania Ulterior, were called, became an increasingly important asset, providing vast quantities of silver bullion, olive oil, and other products which enriched the Empire’s coffers. But with its riches came periods of foment and rebellion against Roman authority, and during some of these periods of civil war fascinating emissions of coins were produced. Spain also provided the Empire with her first two non-Italian born emperors, Trajan (A.D. 98-117) and Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), who were also two of her most accomplished.

Through his collection of Roman coins, we first begin to comprehend Huntington’s astonishingly cosmopolitan interpretation of what he felt was significant to fully understand the history of Spain through numismatics. He strove not merely to assemble a cabinet of coins which had been struck in Spain or under her authority, but of coins which would have circulated there, as well as specific coins struck elsewhere, whose issuance could in some manner have relevance to Spain herself.

One such coin is an exceptionally rare gold solidus (see illus. right, p. 25) struck during the momentary reign of Priscus Attalus (A.D. 409-410; 414-415), of which the standard numismatic reference *Roman Imperial Coins* records only twelve examples known—including the Huntington coin. Priscus Attalus was the prefect of Rome during the Visigothic sack of that city in A.D. 410 under the direction of Alaric I. This event, which augured the collapse of

Rome’s power in the West, was but one devastating stop along the Visigothic wanderings until they finally settled in Spain in the sixth century. Obviously—if only tangentially—relevant to the history of Spain, the inclusion of this coin, though struck in Rome by an ephemeral individual on the world stage, illustrates Huntington’s sophisticated rationale in the formation of his collection.

The Roman gold as a stand-alone assemblage is especially rich, containing more than four hundred coins, of which more than three hundred and thirty are aurei, spanning the full history of Rome. The overall quality is high, with many stunningly well preserved.

A few highlights include an exceptionally rare piece of Sulla (see illus. front, p. 16), examples struck under Julius Caesar (see illus. top, p. 26), Brutus and Cassius, Sextus Pompey (see illus. top, p. 27), the twelve Caesars—including multiple examples of the very rare aurei of Galba (see illus. enlarged detail, p. 26), Otho (see illus. middle, p. 26), and Vitellius (see illus. middle, p. 27), as well as a remarkable Civil War aureus. The Spanish emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, are represented by more than forty examples (see illus. 2nd from bottom, p. 26); the short-lived emperor Pertinax (A.D. 193) by five pieces (see illus. left, p. 25), followed by an astonishing long run of nearly forty Severan (A.D. 193-217) issues including numerous dynastic aurei (see illus. second from bottom, p. 27), and two examples of Macrinus (A.D. 218) in exceptional states of preservation (see illus. bottom, p. 26). Numerous ephemeral third century emperors are represented, as well as an extensive holding of tetrarchic (see illus. bottom, p. 27) and later issues.







The silver and bronze series are even better represented, with nearly three thousand coins issued from the earliest days of the Republic, through the fascinating and defining Imperial period to Augustus and the birth of the Empire. The mid-first century Civil Wars and year of the four emperors (A.D. 68-69) are well represented, as are coins reflecting the coalescence of imperial powers under the Flavians (A.D. 69-96), which culminated in the greatest expansion of the Empire during the reign of Trajan, and his successor Hadrian, before its fracture and demise in the third century. While there are numerous important sub-sections struck in both bronze and silver, and coins of great individual distinction, undoubtedly the most noteworthy, and perhaps the most famous coin of antiquity is the Ides of March denarius (see illus. second from top and enlargement, p. 27). It was struck by Brutus to commemorate (celebrate) the assassination of Julius Caesar (15 March 44 B.C.), only months after Caesar had returned from Spain, having fought victoriously at the battle of Munda, the most difficult of his career.

The Archer Huntington collection of Roman coins could easily stand alone as a triumph in its own right, but as an incredibly rich numismatic chapter in the grand epic of Spain's history, its importance is enhanced.



VISIGOTHIC



V VISIGOTHIC



Huntington's collection of Visigothic coins stands as the single greatest holding of this fascinating and important series ever formed. No individual or institution can claim even remotely comparable holdings.

In 1952, George Miles published his seminal volume, *The Coinage of the Visigoths in Spain: Leovigild to Achila II*. Although it was composed as a corpus of all the then known Visigothic coins, it served to emphasize the importance of Huntington's collection. Miles's work served as the standard reference for more than half a century, and while two Spanish volumes published in the past five years have expanded the number of known specimens, Miles's work, with detailed historical, biographical, metrological, and stylistic information, remains an essential volume.

With the fracturing of the Roman Empire came the onslaught of Germanic tribes, and the Visigoths, who sacked Rome in 410, were among the most successful. This tribe's wanderings brought them north, through Gaul, until withdrawing into the protected confines of the Iberian peninsula. From the mid-fifth century they were the dominant power, until the extinction of the kingdom by Muslim invaders beginning in 711.

Their coinage began, as did other Germanic tribes, with coin types which were imitative of the then circulating Roman coins, and issued anonymously. This is one of the most challenging series for numis-

matists to unravel, but again, Huntington's collection served as the cornerstone of a pioneering work on the subject by Wallace Tomasini (*The Barbaric Tremissis in Spain and Southern France: Anastasius to Leovigild*, New York, 1964).

In the late sixth century, Leovigild (see illus. left, p. 30) added his name to the coinage and the design types metamorphosed into the first mediaeval coinage of a uniquely distinctive national character. The portraiture, rather than imitating the more naturalistic Roman models, took on a quasi-representative design which has an almost proto-Picasso flavor. The coinage, struck exclusively in gold, was issued for twenty-three reigns (of which all but two are represented in the Huntington collection) and continued virtually without interruption until the Visigothic downfall. Coins were struck at no less than seventy-nine different sites, of which the Huntington collection contains approximately half.

Miles, in 1952, estimated that his count of 675 autonomous tremisses in the Huntington collection amounted to approximately twenty percent of those then known to exist. To this must be added the approximately 120 anonymous issues published by Tomasini (again about twenty percent of the then estimated total known). Additionally, Miles's count was augmented in 1957 by another 90 autonomous pieces, most of which emanated from the great nineteenth-century Ferreira collection—including the exceptionally rare tremissis of the last king of the undivided Visigoths, Roderic [710-711] (see illus. p. 17).



To this total may also be added an extraordinary, and still unpublished, group of Suevian and other Barbarian issues which bridge the numismatic gap in Spain from the Visigothic departure from Italy to their consolidation of power in the Iberian peninsula.

Miles, in his corpus, compared Huntington's 675 pieces to the other major institutional holdings worldwide: the Spanish National Collection contained approximately 250 pieces (before, as George Miles described it, being "officially" stolen in 1936), while the British Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the National Collection in Stockholm each contained less than one hundred specimens. Of the few private collections cited by Miles, the largest, formed by Manuel Vidal Quadras y Ramon, contained only 217 coins. Unknown to Miles, and most recently sold at auction, the Caballero de las Yndias collection in Barcelona contained fewer than two hundred coins, as did the anonymous collection sold in Switzerland in 2003—and both of these must be considered among the largest collections of Visigothic coins ever offered at auction.

Although other examples of Visigothic coins have subsequently come to light and have been published more recently, the Huntington collection still stands alone as the largest, most comprehensive, and important collection of its type anywhere.





ISLAMIC SPAIN



VI ISLAMIC SPAIN

In 711, a force of about seven thousand Muslim troops first entered Spain under the command of Tariq at the Straits of Gibraltar, which still bear his name (Gibraltar is a corruption of Jibal Tariq, or “Rock of Tariq”). In a chaotic engagement, with followers of a Visigothic pretender, including the bishop of Seville, fighting alongside the Moors, Roderic and his forces were annihilated, and a new chapter of history on the Iberian peninsula began.

Just as the historical and cultural page turned, Huntington’s collection turns its focus to a fresh series of coins with a radically different aesthetic than those preceding, but again, with the same world class results. The Islamic collection may be said to have been particularly close to Huntington’s heart. It was during his studies into the period of Islamic rule in Spain that he was inspired to become a student of the Arabic language itself, which is invaluable to a fuller understanding of Islamic numismatics.

Precisely because they tend to avoid imagery, giving space for written detail about their production, Islamic coins have long been recognized as being some of the most historically revealing ever struck. Information about ephemeral kingdoms and their petty rulers which is otherwise ignored by contemporary accounts is often faithfully preserved in the numismatic record.

Archer M. Huntington’s Islamic collection is of singular importance, not only for the breadth and variety of the dynasties it spans, but also



because of the sheer mass of material from which in-depth study and comparisons can be made. While the collection covers the entire vista of the Islamic hegemony in the peninsula it is especially rich in the very earliest coinage of Muslim Spain. With the invasion came an unprecedented cultural change which this section illustrates with sparkling clarity through the metamorphosis of coin design.

A half dozen years before Tariq’s troops set foot in Spain, North Africa was firmly under Muslim control, but the population remained predominantly Christian. The Arab practice was to interfere as little as possible with the administrative infrastructure in newly captured lands, and the coinage issued at this time reflected this blending of religions, languages, and cultures. The small, squat, gold coins that were struck freely copied designs used by the Byzantines, bearing the imperial busts on one side (see illus. p. 34); however the crosses atop their crowns disappeared as did the cross Calvary on the reverse, which was modified to the shape of a “T”. The inscription (“There is no God but Him alone who has no associate”) was a profession of Muslim faith rejecting the Christian Trinity, but rendered in Latin letters rather than Arabic.

This remained the basic pattern to which the first gold coins struck in Muslim Spain adhered, but the designs continued to evolve. The small, thick shape of the coins remained unchanged, and they still bore Latin versions of Muslim religious formulae, but the imperial busts were replaced by an eight-pointed star, and the “T” cross became a single line of inscription. The reverse inscription, still ren-



dered in Latin, identified the denomination (solidus) and mint (Spain), but expressed the date in both the Muslim Hijri and Byzantine indictional system of dating.

Within less than a decade, as Muslim control became more firmly established, this bi-lingual sop to the local population was scrapped and the decision was taken to incorporate the mint production of North Africa and Spain into the mainstream of Islamic coin production. The dumpy shapes gave way to coins that were broad and thin in fabric, and Kufic calligraphy now expressed the exclusively Arabic legends and dating system. The first gold issue of these coins in Spain was struck in 102h/A.D. 720 (see illus. p. 35) in three denominations, and Huntington's is the world's only institutional collection to hold examples of all three. Their reflection of the assimilation of Muslim Spain within the Umayyad empire could not be clearer.

The Umayyad dynasty fell thirty years after these coins were struck, and almost all the family members were killed. One prince, however, escaped and found his way to Spain, where he founded an independent emirate that endured for more than three centuries.

The coinage of these formative years is one of the most extensively examined groups of the collection, and many of its pieces have been published in numerous standard volumes and articles. It was the first portion of Huntington's collection to receive the scrutiny of George Miles, whose *The Coinage of the Umayyads of Spain* (New York, 1950),

based on the collection, remains the definitive work on the subject, more than a half century later. Miles quickly followed up with *Coins of the Spanish Muluk al-Tawa'if* (New York, 1954), another work focusing on the collection that remains of imperative importance. In yet a third opus, *The Numismatic History of Late Medieval North Africa* (New York, 1952), ANS research fellow Harry W. Hazard wrote of Huntington's "splendid" collection "especially rich in Murabit and Muwahhid issues," to which yet more were added in 1957.

The Archer M. Huntington collection of Spanish Islamic coins brilliantly illuminates the economic and artistic prosperity of Muslim rule through seven centuries, and is considered to be in all likelihood "the most important such collection in existence."





MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN SPAIN



VII MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN SPAIN

Although from the eighth century Muslim invaders dominated much of the Iberian peninsula, their hold was not absolute. Small pockets of resistance held out, primarily in the north and west, and retained control over a quarter of the peninsula. They were backward and poverty-stricken but would be the vanguard of what became the “Reconquista”—the Reconquest.

During the first three centuries of Muslim supremacy the fragmentary Christian enclaves produced only sporadic coinages of their own, which generally borrowed design types from the Islamic invaders to the south, or the encroaching Franks in the northeast.

In the eleventh century, as the Umayyad dynasty collapsed and al-Andalus was racked by bloody strife, the Christian kingdoms and counties incrementally consolidated their power, began their gradual expansion, and by the beginning of the thirteenth century controlled half the peninsula. Just two and a half centuries later, the united crowns of Aragon and Castile, Ferdinand V and Isabella—the Reyes Catolicos—completed the unification of Spain with the conquest of Granada in 1492, the year Columbus discovered the New World. As Spain stood at the threshold of her Golden Age, her fortunes seemed limitless.

Archer M. Huntington’s collection of coins of the mediaeval and later period has been called one of the greatest in existence, documenting the reassertion of the Christian kingdoms through series of coins which are both humble and grand.

This sub-collection contains an array of celebrated rarities. A very short list of some of these would include the astonishing reale (blanca) of Beatriz of Portugal who married Juan I in 1383 (see illus. left, p. 39). Its portrait, the first of a woman on Spanish (or Portuguese) coinage, is an arresting image, and the coin is a reminder of the centuries long struggle between Portugal and Spain (along with the occasional royal marriages that bound, though chaffing, the countries together). The Huntington coin is quite possibly the finest example of this remarkable emission (even lacking from the Portuguese National Collection), of which only three are believed to be known.

Beatriz’s father, Fernando I (1367-1383) of Portugal struck a very limited series of gold coins, all of which are of the utmost rarity. Huntington nevertheless managed to secure three examples of the exceptionally rare dobra pe terra (see illus. right, p. 40), when it can be scores of years between a single example’s appearance at auction. The collection also contains the even rarer half dobra pe terra, a coin of which the National Collection in Portugal has only a fragment.

Certainly the highlight of this portion of Huntington’s collection is one which straddles the mediaeval and modern eras, and is, without doubt, the greatest single coin among all thirty-eight thousand in the cabinet: the monumental and unique example of the fifty excelentes struck by the Reyes Catolicos, Ferdinand and Isabella.



Struck during the period of Columbus's transformative expeditions to the New World, this massive coin (probably the largest gold coin of the fifteenth century in existence) was produced following the pragmática of 1497 which succeeded in stabilizing Spain's gold currency, putting it on an equal footing in trade with the long respected, and internationally recognized, Venetian zecchino. Probably made as a donative for an individual whom the king and queen wished to honor, the portraits of the Reyes Católicos are robust, and it is tempting to identify the jewel worn round Isabella's throat on the fifty excelentes as that shown in the portrait panel of Isabella in the British Royal Collection.

Huntington's collection also contains an example of the ten excelentes (see illus. right, p. 39), a smaller cousin of the fifty excelentes, but also one which is believed unique (two coins of this denomination are recorded, but of differing designs). In 1987, an exhibition mounted by the Banco de España, *Monedas Hispánicas 1475-1598*, which drew on all the major national collections, was only able to exhibit a reproduction of this fabled rarity, with a note in the catalogue by the Spanish numismatist Juan Cayon: "Este pieza es casi mítica." He continued: "Al decir de muchos, su precio se acerca a los veinticinco millones de pesetas." This substantial valuation, at the time approximately \$230,000, was four times greater than he assigned to the larger (more common) twenty excelentes, examples of which have recently sold at auction for prices of up to three-quarters of a million dollars.



The Golden Age lasted less than a century: over expansion, the humiliating defeat of the Armada in 1588, and excessive debt (a remarkable failure, especially at a time when cargoes of astonishing wealth from the New World seemed to arrive daily) were among the harbingers of Spain's long decline.

The Huntington collection is replete with great rarities from this period of descent as well. Some of them however, most notably the enormous fifty reales (cinquentin)—of which the collection contains three examples (including the excessively rare issue of 1613)—are of such individual richness that their production would seem to belie the political realities of the day (see illus. right, p. 15 and left, p. 41).

The most remarkable seventeenth century coin, and indubitably one of the most important coins in the entire collection is the eight escudo piece struck in Pamplona in 1652 (see illus. right, p. 16 and right, p. 41). Turn to any of the major references published on Spanish coins for well over a century, and only a line drawing of this example will be found. A tangible reminder of Spain's seemingly interminable conflicts, it was struck under Philip IV, during the French occupation, and astonishingly, this important coin has been hiding in plain sight in the trays for more than a half century, its very existence apparently unacknowledged by contemporary numismatists.

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the Hapsburgs give way to the Bourbons in Spain in the guise of a sixteen-year-old grandson



of Louis XIV. As Philip V, longing for a return to the French court, he would rule for nearly a half century, with one intermission. In 1724, with his nephew, the French king Louis XV believed to be dying, Philip abdicated the throne in favor of his sixteen-year-old son as Luis I, and he himself prepared to occupy the French throne. Louis XV recovered and ruled for a half century more, but young Luis succumbed to smallpox months into his reign, and Philip returned to the Spanish throne. An infinitesimal issue of coins was struck for this ephemeral king, including eight escudo pieces, which are considered to be lynchpin rarities in the Spanish series, and the Huntington collection contains a stunning example (see illus. right, p. 15 and enlarged detail, p. 40)

The roster of additional rarities in Huntington's collection of mediaeval and modern mainland Spanish coins is a rich one. But in addition to these individual stars, it is because of both the enormity and diversity of Huntington's cabinet (which continues to yield new discoveries, including, most recently, what may be the earliest Christian coinage of Castile) that it is considered to be one of the greatest in existence.





IMPERIAL SPAIN



VIII IMPERIAL SPAIN

The joining of the crowns of Spain, the vast riches recovered from the Age of Discovery, and the election of King Charles I of Spain as the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1519, set the dynamics for the extraordinarily swift spread of Spanish influence around the globe.

Spain's cultural and political tendrils now crept through Italy, France, and the Low Countries—not to mention most of the newly discovered lands in the New World. Archer M. Huntington creatively expanded on that numismatic hegemony to include additional territories that fell under Hapsburg or Portuguese rule.

While the collection encompasses numerous regular issue European coins struck at mints in Milan, Naples, France, Messina, Malta, Bremen, Bruges, Flanders, Regensburg, and Wurzburg to name but a few, one of the most fascinating and important sections of this sub-collection is devoted to obsidional coinage.

These were emergency issues, struck in time of need, often to pay troops under seige. They are coins of great character; more often than not they were crudely produced and are frequently irregular in shape, occasionally having been cut directly from gold or silver plate. They are, by their very nature, not only rare, but remarkably important historical snapshots not only of some otherwise forgotten siege of a minor town, but also of some of history's most significant and harrowing events. From Huntington's comprehensive collection three,



struck within five years of one another, illuminate the chaotic nature of politics and war in sixteenth century Europe.

In 1524-1525 Pavia was the site of a siege and battle between the French and Charles's Imperial troops; not only were the French annihilated (in a defeat that has been compared to Agincourt), but King Francis I was captured, and the battle is considered to be the last vestige of knightly combat. The gold ducat struck during the siege is of the utmost rarity, and none are known to have been offered for sale in more than a century (see illus. left, p. 45)

Many of the same troops who triumphed at Pavia, continued their march south, and in May 1527, laid waste to the Eternal City, Rome. The Sack of Rome was culturally and politically devastating. The Pope and much of the Curia fled to safety in Castel Sant'Angelo from where they watched in horror the rapine and butchery that ensued for months. Among the few tangible objects produced during this agonizing period were the coins struck in Castel Sant'Angelo. Of great rarity, they bear the arms of the Medici Pope Clement VII on one side, and the portraits of Saints Peter and Paul on the reverse (see illus. p. 44). The dies were once thought to have been cut by the great artist Benvenuto Cellini, who was known to have manned the guns during the Sack, and who wrote vividly of the experience. The last example to appear at auction was more than a quarter century ago, which attests to the rarity of this evocative issue, of which Huntington secured two examples.







Two years later in 1529, the Holy Roman Empire now found itself on the defensive. Vienna was besieged by Suleiman the Great's forces, during which a small series of lozenge-shaped gold coins was struck (see illus. front and right, p. 45), bearing the bust of Charles V's brother Ferdinand. This brief emission, of which Huntington secured examples of three separate denominations, stands as a tangible testament to the halt of the Ottoman advances west.

Spain during this period was fighting battles on virtually all fronts, draining its vitality and coffers. In the Netherlands she was engaged in a losing eighty-year civil war which is recorded by an extraordinary panoply of coins and tokens in Huntington's collection.

Concurrent with Spain struggling to retain its European possessions, she was expanding her global reach in a manner and at a pace hitherto unmatched in history. Archer Huntington's collection records the numismatic expanse of these enterprises from the beginning of the sixteenth century onwards; and it includes issues intended for circulation in the New World in Santo Domingo, as well as some of the earliest issues struck at the first mint in the Americas at Mexico City (see illus. top, p. 47).

Within this impressive assemblage of Colonial issues are included more than a dozen Royal presentation strikes, among the most desired coins of the New World which are fully round, and of far superior workmanship to the crude cob coinage which was issued alongside it (see illus. left and right, p. 46). A particularly important, and possibly unique, example in the Huntington collection is an eight escudo

piece which was struck in Mexico City in 1729, and has survived in virtually pristine condition (see illus. left, p. 16 and center, p. 46).

The collection fully chronicles the Colonial period in the newly discovered lands and contains not only extensive runs of gold coinage, but also astonishingly well-preserved silver issues as well, such as a remarkable group of Guatemalan eight reales, which appear to have never been circulated.

As Spanish power waned, waves of rebellion rippled throughout the New World, and fascinating series of coins were struck by upstarts, royalists, and ultimately the new republics themselves. Huntington's collection is well represented by any number of these issues, particularly those struck in Mexico, such as the incredibly crude, but rare, eight reale royalist issues struck in Real del Catorce, as well as an example of the classic "hooked-necked eagle" eight escudos, the first of these struck by the new Mexican republic.

As he had with the European series struck during this period, Huntington collected material which was not strictly "Spanish" in nature, but which he saw as consistent with his collecting goals. Most significant of these tangential sub-groups is the series of Brazilian coins, which were struck by the Portuguese, Spain's chief competitor in the race for colonial domination. The highlights of this section are the two Brazilian gold currency bars (see illus. bottom, p. 47), which attest not only to the native riches of the newly discovered lands, but also why international competition was so keen to settle these domains first.

IX CONCLUSION

The few highlights that are mentioned above can only provide the slightest shadow of the importance of the Huntington collection. It is for all intents and purposes unique. Archer M. Huntington assembled it with a keen eye, and an unusually catholic intellectual approach to a specialized subject. Spain, whose coinage is undoubtedly the most ecumenical in all of numismatics is, of course, the best suited to such an approach, but still Mr. Huntington stretched the boundaries to their fullest extent.

Perhaps one gauge of just how monumental was Huntington's achievement, and just how remarkably important the collection is deemed by numismatists around the world is the astonishing publication record related to coins in the holding. Not only are a number of seminal volumes devoted in large part to major sub-collections of the Huntington collection, but the number of articles, citations, and illustrations of Huntington coins which grace the world's numismatic literature is astonishing and probably incalculable (a partial bibliography of some of these is appended). In fact, the Huntington collection is quite probably the most fully published of any collection ever offered for sale in its entirety.

For any collector of the seemingly disparate series contained in this collection to attain some semblance of success on even the most rudimentary level would be an achievement of note. In an area where completion is impossible, Archer M. Huntington assembled a collection of incredible complexity, astonishing diversity, and incalculable grandeur. Its like will not be seen again.



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